

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL RESOURCES
OFFICE OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

ARCHIVES INFORMATION CIRCULAR

Number 13 (1975) Revised March, 2002 (LO)

Raleigh, N. C.

NORTH CAROLINA REVOLUTIONARY WAR RECORDS OF PRIMARY INTEREST TO GENEALOGISTS

Archivists at the North Carolina State Archives receive numerous requests dealing with the multiple collections preserved and maintained by the Archives. In answer to letters inquiring about Revolutionary War soldiers, the Archives staff makes a routine check of [three resources of information](#): pay vouchers and certificates; Army account books; and Colonial and State Records of North Carolina. Researchers visiting the Archives to search for information have considerably more records available to them than do those who merely write for information. The purpose of this circular is to describe briefly the major sources of information relating to North Carolina's Revolutionary War soldiers and patriots available to genealogical researchers in the North Carolina State Archives.

FINANCIAL RECORDS

Pay Vouchers and Certificates: These slips of paper, about the size of dollar bills, were used instead of money by the State of North Carolina to pay soldiers and citizens who furnished supplies or rendered other services. The pay vouchers and certificates were part of a complex financial system explained in [Archives Information Circular No. 1. – NORTH CAROLINA'S REVOLUTIONARY WAR PAY RECORDS](#). There are approximately 50,000 surviving pay vouchers and certificates; they are arranged alphabetically by the name of the person to whom they were issued.

Account Books: In the Revolutionary War era, the state bookkeeping system used volumes called "account books" to record the issue of vouchers and certificates. In addition, account books also represent a record of their return, when - upon payment - these pay vouchers and certificates were surrendered to the state treasurer. There are twenty-seven account books available to researchers. These have been comprehensively indexed in a single alphabetical listing on microfiche. This alphabetical index is available to researchers in the Archives Research Room; moreover, Archivists search the index to answer written inquiries. The account books, like the vouchers, are explained more fully in the above-mentioned *Archives Information Circular No. 1*.

Final Settlements: As the system of vouchers and account books suggests, the Revolutionary War was run on credit. This was true on the national as well as on the state level. Commissioners appointed at both levels settled debts owed by the state and the federal government; then the two governments settled their respective shares of the war debt. Settlements of outstanding debts owed to soldiers of the Continental Line (for deficits in pay, subsistence, or clothing) were called "Final Settlements." There are in the North Carolina State Archives about 600 files of accounts of Continental Line soldiers with deficits due to them after the Revolutionary War. These Final Settlements are a part of the Military series, Treasurer's and Comptroller's Records (T&C Mil 14-20). Final Settlements are foldered individually and are arranged alphabetically; a few folders include records on more than one person. The records range from 1776 to 1792, though most of them date from the early

1790s. The amount of information on an individual soldier or patriot varies greatly from account to account. A list of the accounts by name and county of residence has been published in the magazine *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal* Vol. 8, 95-101, 154-161, 209-214; Vol. 9, 23-31, 85-91, 147-154, 221-228; Vol. 10, 107-113, 235-241; Vol. 11, 113-118, 239-242; Vol. 12, 95-104, 228-233; Vol. 14, 109-116, 227-235; Vol. 15, 101-107, 228-235; Vol. 16, 107-114, 233-239; Vol. 17, 108-116, 216-223; Vol. 18, 92-100, 236-245. These records may be examined in the Research Room; in addition, the Archives staff will check the Final Settlements files for inquiries by mail when *specifically requested* to do so. **Please note that these records are not routinely searched for correspondence requests..**

State Pensions to Invalids and Widows: Apart from its regular financial system of compensation for soldiers, in 1784 the General Assembly passed "An Act for the relief of such persons as have been disabled by wounds, or rendered incapable of procuring for themselves and families subsistence, in the Militia Service of this State, and providing for the Widows and Orphans of such as have died." The pensions granted to invalids and widows under the provisions of this act were based on the distressed economic situation of the claimant. North Carolina granted a total of 97 pensions to disabled militia soldiers and their widows. In 1806, the United States enlarged its pension act to include state militia as well as Continental Line soldiers; in 1808, at least forty of North Carolina's pensioners were transferred to the federal rolls. The remaining 57 state pensioners continued to receive pensions from North Carolina until removed from the state rolls by death or by the General Assembly. In view of the fact that the federal pension records prior to 1813 were destroyed when the British burned Washington, DC, North Carolina's records of state pensions to invalids and widows may furnish otherwise lost information. The amount and quality of information in the records varies from file to file. Surviving loose records of state pensions are foldered by name of the veteran and filed alphabetically in the Military series, Treasurer's and Comptroller's Records, in the North Carolina State Archives (T&C Mil 25-30). A bound volume of pension accounts (T&C Mil 69) is a companion to the loose records. A list of those receiving pensions from this state as of December 31, 1807, was published in the *North Carolinian*, the Quarterly Journal of Genealogy and History, Vol. VI (1960: 679-680). This 1807 list represents, in general, those who were transferred to the national pension rolls in the following year. A full listing of the North Carolina state pensioners has not yet been published. State pension records may be examined in the Research Room. The Archives staff will check the "State Pensions to Invalids and Widows" for inquiries by mail when *specifically requested* to do so. **Please note that these records are not routinely searched for correspondence requests.**

LAND-RELATED RECORDS

In order to fulfill a recruiting promise made by the state to soldiers enlisting in the regular army (Continental Line) during the Revolutionary War, North Carolina set aside a large tract of land in what subsequently became Davidson and Sumner counties, in Tennessee [admitted as the 16th state June 1, 1796]. After the war, and until as late as 1841, North Carolina issued more than 6,500 warrants for grants of bounty lands; until 1797 the grants were made by North Carolina, but after 1800 the grants were made by Tennessee. **The North Carolina State Archives does not have any bounty land grant records for dates beyond 1797.** See the "Secretary of State: Land Grants in Tennessee 1778-1791" at the Research Room (microfilm S.108.1), as well as the "List of North Carolina Land Grants in Tennessee, 1778-1791" at the National Archives and Records Administration [NARA], <http://www.archives.gov/>, then look for Microfilm Publications Catalog and record M68.

The amount of land granted as a bounty was predicated upon the rank or grade of the soldier and upon the length of his service. For example, a private received about 7.6 acres for each month's service: 84 months' service (all seven years of the war) entitled a private to 640 acres; 60 months' service, 457 acres; 30 months' service, 228 acres, etc. **Militia soldiers (home guard) were not entitled to this land.** In order to claim eligibility to land, soldiers or their heirs were required to offer proof of service. Proof of service was checked

against a register of the Continental Line especially prepared for this purpose. If the claim appeared valid, the Secretary of State issued a document called a warrant to the soldier or his heirs, which authorized (or warranted) the surveyor to lay off a specified number of acres. On the basis of the warrant and the surveyor's map (or plat) of the land, the Secretary of State issued a patent of title to the specified number of acres.

Register of Military Land Warrants: When warrants were issued, a notation was made in a register kept for that purpose. This register is now in the North Carolina State Archives. The warrants were numbered sequentially as they were issued. The register records the sequential number of the warrant, the name and rank of the soldier to whom it was issued, the number of acres to which he was entitled, the length of his service, the date the warrant was issued, and the name of the person who received the warrant for the soldier from the office of the Secretary of State. Names of heirs are not shown in the register, nor are names of parents, details of service, or other personal data. When the soldier or his heirs received the warrant, they could sell it to anyone else, and often they did. This means that the warrant was negotiable and sometimes legally came into the possession of a person other than the soldier or his heirs. Such a person is called the assignee. One assignee, in turn, often sold the warrant to another. The last assignee was the one who turned in the warrant and the surveyor's plat in order to get a patent of title to the land. Some warrants had as many as six or seven assignees. If the bounty grant was made by North Carolina (that is, before 1798) the original warrant and plat should be searched for in the North Carolina Archives. If the grant of bounty lands was made by Tennessee (that is, after 1800) the original warrant and plat should be sought at the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville. <http://www.state.tn.us/sos/statelib/techsvs/ip2.htm#1> Land records].

It is sometimes difficult to locate the original bounty land warrant and plats in the North Carolina Archives. The warrants are not filed under their original number, but are filed under a later numbering scheme. Also, when the original warrants and plats were indexed by the Secretary of State's staff, between 1909 and 1919, the name of the last assignee was reported in the index; sometimes the name of the Continental Line soldier was indexed but sometimes it was not. This means that there is no simple way to relate the warrant register to the original warrants (and resulting patents of title to military lands). Unless one already knows the name of the last assignee, it is sometimes impossible to locate the copy of the original warrant issued to a soldier or his heirs. The register of military land warrants has been indexed. Both the index and the register are available for use in the Research Room. The Archives staff will check the index to the register for inquiries by mail *when specifically requested* to do so. **Please note that these records are not routinely searched for correspondence requests.**

Proofs of Military Service in Secretary of State Records: Until the State of North Carolina ceded its western lands in 1790, it is likely that little proof other than the verbal word of a superior officer and the entry on the muster rolls was required before a military land warrant was issued. A total of 3,702 warrants were issued before 1790, and probably no proof of service will be found for soldiers to whom those warrants were issued other than entries on the Register of the North Carolina Line. However, in 1792, three commissioners were appointed by the General Assembly to approve or disapprove the claims of Continental Line soldiers. Those soldiers whose claims were not approved by the commissioners could petition the General Assembly for reconsideration. More will be said in the next subsection of this circular about petitions addressed to the legislature. By an Act of 1799 the Secretary of State was given sole authority to determine the acceptability of proofs offered by soldiers not on the Register of the North Carolina Line; the General Assembly, however, continued to consider appeals from soldiers. As this system appeared unsatisfactory, in 1807 a new state law required that no warrants be issued to soldiers not appearing on the Register of the North Carolina Line except when authorized by resolution of the General Assembly. In 1811 another law was enacted which required different kinds of proof from three categories of claimants: (1) claimants in their own right were required to submit at least one deposition showing evidence of entitlement to military lands; (2) claimants on behalf of another were required to submit the deposition and a copy of the power of attorney authorizing them to make

the claim; (3) guardians were required to submit the deposition and a certified copy of appointment as guardian. Finally in 1819, the Governor, Treasurer, and Comptroller were made commissioners with full power to hear and determine all applications for military lands.

There are 1,422 folders of surviving depositions and proofs submitted by claimants under the systems of evidence just described. These folders are maintained by the North Carolina State Archives, in the Secretary of State Records, in what is known as "Revolutionary Military Papers." The bulk of these records, a storehouse of genealogical information, was submitted after the act of 1799. Generally they date from the early 1800s, although some of the records date from the 1760s to as late as the 1850s.

A comprehensive card index to the approximately 8,000 names of soldiers and/or their parents, widows, children, siblings, other kinsmen, comrades-at-arms, neighbors, clergymen, and agents has been prepared and is available in the Research Room. The Archives staff will check the index to the "Secretary of State's Revolutionary Military Papers" for inquiries by mail when *specifically requested* to do so. **Please note that these records are not routinely searched for correspondence requests.**

Proofs of Military Service in General Assembly Session Records: A similar wealth of information can be found in the large number of petitions addressed to the legislature by soldiers and their heirs from the time of the Revolution to as late as the 1850s. As noted above, laws relating to claims for military lands recognized the ultimate authority of the General Assembly to decide the merits of a claim. Soldiers whose claims were questionable, and between 1807 and 1819 this included all soldiers whose names did not appear on the Register of the North Carolina Line, requested the legislature to intervene in their cases and authorize the issuance of a warrant for military land. These memorials and petitions generally give some details of service, name the unit in which the man fought, and sometimes give personal information. Note also that petitions to the General Assembly were not limited to appeals from Continental Line soldiers hoping for land. Other benefits resulting from service were sought by former militia soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War as well as by soldiers of the Continental Line.

These petitions are preserved in the records of the General Assembly in the North Carolina State Archives. There is no *easy* way to locate petitions from Revolutionary War soldiers, though the late Marybelle Delamar made a concerted effort to locate, transcribe, and index these memorials. Before her death, Miss Delamar had prepared 943 pages of typed, verbatim transcriptions of memorials and petitions that she had located in what was then called "Legislative Papers," dated from the period of the Revolution to about 1833. She had also completed an alphabetical index to the transcriptions, which includes nearly 3,000 names, and which is available to researchers in the Research Room. Copies of the Delamar transcriptions can be made, but they cannot be certified by the North Carolina State Archives as being true copies of state records. These transcriptions can be utilized by patrons to locate the originals in the General Assembly Session Records using the date of the petition. Incidentally, these records have now been reorganized and are listed as an "L.P." box number.

Although the Archives staff cannot undertake to search for original petitions in the General Assembly Session Records, the index to Delamar's transcriptions can be checked for researchers who inquire by mail when they *specifically request* such a check. **Please note that these transcriptions are not routinely searched for correspondence requests.**

OTHER RECORDS

Colonial and State Records of North Carolina: This published collection, with its index, includes 30 volumes. The first ten volumes, edited by William L. Saunders, cover the years 1662 through 1776, and are

known as *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*. The next 16 volumes, edited by Walter Clark, contain records for the years 1776 through 1790, and are known as *The State Records of North Carolina*. The last four volumes include a comprehensive index covering the preceding 26 volumes and compiled by Stephen B. Weeks. Records from the North Carolina State Archives, from the Public Record Office in London, and from other private and public institutions in the United States are published in this set of books. The 30 volume collection is particularly enriched by Revolutionary War period sources and contains a register of the state's Continental Line, some pay records for both militia and Continental Line soldiers, military correspondence, and records of executive and legislative bodies. *The Colonial and State Records of North Carolina* are automatically checked by the Archives staff responding to written inquiries concerning Revolutionary War service.

Register of the North Carolina Continental Line: In 1790, when North Carolina was settling its share of the Revolutionary War debt with the federal government, it sent to the federal agents all of the muster and pay rolls that could be found for the North Carolina regiments in the Continental Line. Then, in order to have a record against which to check claims for bounty land grants, the state had clerks in the office of the federal agents in Philadelphia copy all information from the muster and pay rolls. The result was a volume that is called *The Register of the North Carolina Line*. The original records used by the clerks in Philadelphia when preparing the register were later destroyed when the British burned Washington in 1814. This is especially unfortunate because the clerks in Philadelphia accidentally assigned to the 10th Regiment of North Carolina nearly 30 companies of soldiers belonging to the other nine regiments. The destruction of the original muster and pay rolls means that this error can never be corrected officially; the Archives is obliged to report the information as it appears in the extant record. *The Register of the North Carolina Line* was published in volume XVI of *The State Records of North Carolina*, and therefore is included in the index to these volumes. When written inquiries are received, the Archives staff automatically checks the index to the printed version of this roll.

Troop Returns: There are five small boxes of Continental Line and militia troop returns for the period 1775 through 1783 in the North Carolina State Archives. These formal reports on personnel strength of military units are located in the "Military Collection." Some of the returns are rather full descriptive lists of soldiers; some are rosters of soldiers' names; others are very brief reports of recruitments. A few of the returns were selected for publication in the *State Records*; others were not. These troops returns, for which there is no index, are available to researchers who come to the Search Room. **The Archives staff is unable to undertake a search for names on troop returns.**

County Records: Minutes of county inferior and superior courts include many depositions from Revolutionary War soldiers who hoped to be added to the federal pension rolls. It is possible to find such depositions, which include both personal and military service data, in court minutes from as early as 1780 and as late as 1860. Generally, however, they can be found between the years 1818 and 1845. As a rule, these depositions were written on a separate piece of paper before being copied into the court minutes. A random check of 21 such depositions, found in the Rowan County court records in the Archives, reveals that the group includes depositions from eight applicants for pensions not included in surviving federal pension records in the National Archives. In some instances, the original depositions of Revolutionary War service submitted by soldiers have survived and can be found in the "Miscellaneous" category of county records in the State Archives. These records are listed at least to box or folder level in the card catalog for county records. Though they are available to researchers who visit the Research Room, **the Archives staff is unable to undertake a search for pension depositions in these unindexed court minutes and records.** A listing of these depositions appears in the *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal* Vol. 10, 39-43, 160-169; Vol. 11, 16-24, 170-176; Vol. 12, 36-49, 173-187; Vol. 13, 32-44, 153-163; Vol. 14, 38-47, 167-178; Vol. 15, 23-32, 155-165; Vol. 16, 25-35, 156-162; Vol. 17, 30-36, 154-160; Vol. 19, 36-47, 169-177; and Vol. 20, 40-48.